



July 27, 2011

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## **The MA Invasive Plant Advisory Group (MIPAG) is Conducting Online Survey**

The Massachusetts Invasive Plant Advisory Group (MIPAG) is conducting an online survey to help identify and direct the group's priorities for dealing with invasive plant issues in 2011 and beyond. MIPAG represents numerous public and private interests that have been working together on this topic since 1999. MIPAG recognizes that in order to meaningfully address the environmental, cultural and economic impacts of invasive plant species in our state, we need the commitment and collaboration of diverse groups, working in partnership at appropriate scales, to confront this problem that affects us all. To participate, visit:

[www.surveymonkey.com/s/2M9VV57](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2M9VV57). Please respond by July 29, 2011.

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## **August - Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) Awareness Month**

Lt. Governor Tim Murray will offer a proclamation declaring August ALB Awareness Month on August 10, 2011. The event, taking place in the Worcester area, will have special guests who will recognize the efforts of MDAR, DCR, USDA, and other partners in the eradication and education efforts addressing the Asian Longhorned Beetle problem in the Worcester region. Details of the upcoming event will be posted on the MDAR website soon! [www.mass.gov/agr](http://www.mass.gov/agr).

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## **Farm Bill Education Session**

August 12, 2011, 10:30 a.m. to noon (UMass, Amherst, Lincoln Campus Center Room 803)  
New England Farmers Union Executive Director Winton Pitcoff will present an overview of the 2012 farm bill, how it will affect New England farmers and consumers, and how you can help

shape this crucial piece of legislation. The event will take place before the start of the NOFA Summer Conference, but is free and conference registration is not necessary to attend. For more information visit [www.nofasummerconference.org/program.php#NEFU](http://www.nofasummerconference.org/program.php#NEFU) or email [winton@newenglandfarmersunion.org](mailto:winton@newenglandfarmersunion.org).

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## **Massachusetts Tomato Contest to be Held August 22nd**

The 27th Annual Massachusetts Tomato Contest will be held at Boston's City Hall Plaza Farmers' Market on Monday, August 22nd in conjunction with the City Hall Plaza Farmers' Market and the start of Massachusetts Farmers' Market Week. Tomatoes will be judged by a panel of experts on flavor, firmness/slicing quality, exterior color and shape. Always a lively and fun event, the day is designed to increase awareness of locally grown produce.

Farmers who want to submit entries can bring tomatoes to the City Hall Plaza Farmers' Market between 9:00 am and 10:15 am on August 22nd or drop their entries off with the corresponding registration form to one of several locations around the state on August 20th or 21st. These tomatoes will be brought in to Boston on Monday. For the complete details, including contest criteria and a registration form, [click here](#).

The 27th Annual Tomato Contest is sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, New England Vegetable and Berry Growers Association and Mass Farmers Markets.

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## **Calling for Vendors at Mass. Marketplace**

Mass. Marketplace at Massachusetts Horticultural Society - Elm Bank, Wellesley, MA - August 6, 2011

MASS MARKETPLACE: Massachusetts Horticultural Society's Mass Marketplace goal is to showcase the finest products from Massachusetts' fields, farms, gardens, kitchens, local artists and artisans. We are looking for...

- Locally grown agriculture: produce, fruits, etc.
- Specialty foods: homemade baked goods, honey, maple syrup, gourmet jams, jellies and marmalade, pesto, hummus, farmstead cheeses, etc.
- Flora culture: plants, pots, tools, and garden sculptures
- Natural Crafts: hand- made baskets, woolens, hemp, pottery (stoneware), soaps, greeting cards, dog-friendly foods, etc.



If you are interested in exhibiting at this event, please [download our vendor application form](#). If you have questions, please e-mail us at [massmarketplace@masshort.org](mailto:massmarketplace@masshort.org), or contact Penni Jenkins at 617-933-4988. Please visit our website at: [www.masshort.org](http://www.masshort.org).

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## USDA Invites Applications for Value Added Producer Grant

The U.S. EPA AgSTAR Program is pleased to provide its Partners and other interested parties information on U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Value-Added Producer Grant Program [www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP\\_VAPG\\_Grants.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP_VAPG_Grants.html).

Applications are being accepted for grants to provide economic assistance to independent producers, farmer and rancher cooperatives, and agricultural producer groups through the Value-Added Producer Grant Program. The grants may be used for feasibility studies or business plans, working capital for marketing value-added agricultural products, and for farm-based renewable energy projects, including anaerobic digester projects. Eligible applicants include independent producers, farmer and rancher cooperatives, and agricultural producer groups.

In 2009, VanDerHyde Dairy in Chatham, Virginia received a \$150,000 grant from the USDA's Value-Added Producer Program that helped the dairy with both start-up and planning costs to get an anaerobic digestion system. The application deadline is August 29, 2011. For further details about eligibility rules and application procedures, see the Federal Register at [www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-06-28/html/2011-16121.htm](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-06-28/html/2011-16121.htm).

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MDAR's mission is to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture in Massachusetts. Through its four divisions – Agricultural Conservation & Technical Assistance, Agricultural Markets, Animal Health, and Crop and Pest Services – MDAR strives to support, regulate and enhance the rich diversity of the Commonwealth's agricultural community to promote economically and environmentally sound food safety and animal health measures, and fulfill agriculture's role in energy conservation and production. For more information, visit MDAR's website at [mass.gov/agr](http://mass.gov/agr), and/or follow at [twitter.com/agcommishsoares](http://twitter.com/agcommishsoares).